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NEWS RELEASE

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Judiciary Revises Court Interpreter Fee Schedule

The Hawai'i State Judiciary has established a new court interpreter fee schedule and payment guidelines, effective January 1, 2004. Under the new fee schedule, interpreters will receive \$50 base pay for up to two hours of work and \$25 for each subsequent hour. Interpreters who hold certification credentials will receive a base pay of \$75 and \$37.50 for each subsequent hour.

Court interpreters are freelance contractors who are hired as needed to provide interpreting services to non-English speaking persons involved in certain court proceedings. Currently, interpreters are paid a half-day flat rate of \$50 for trials and \$40 for all other assignments.

In fiscal year 2001-2002, the Judiciary spent \$177,000 on interpreting services. During the past legislative session, the Judiciary sought \$182,000 to fund a fee increase for interpreters. Half of the requested amount was appropriated, thereby delaying the effective date of the new fee schedule to help make up for the anticipated shortfall.

The changes to the existing fee schedule were proposed by the Hawai'i Supreme Court Committee on Certification of Court Interpreters. The 21-member committee is comprised of interpreters, attorneys, judges, and Judiciary staff. The committee also proposed payment guidelines to standardize administrative practices among the courts statewide. Rick Keller, Administrative Director of the Courts, approved both the fee schedule and the guidelines.

Ronald T. Y. Moon, Chief Justice of the Hawai'i Supreme Court, has charged a Judiciary task force with implementation of the fees and guidelines, saying, "Interpreters are essential to ensuring access and fairness in the courts. The Judiciary is committed to seeking ways to attract and retain trained, qualified interpreters to ensure that non-English speakers have equal access to the courts."

Under the existing system, which has been in place since 1989, an interpreter who works less than an hour receives the same half-day pay as an interpreter who works four hours. As of January 1, non-certified interpreters will receive \$100 for four hours of services or \$200 for an eight-hour day. Certified interpreters will be paid \$150 for four hours, or \$300 for eight hours.

"The intent behind paying an hourly rate versus a flat fee is to more fairly compensate interpreters for the value of their time while adhering to our duty to be fiscally responsible with taxpayers' monies," said Circuit Court Judge Sabrina McKenna, chair of the Hawai'i Supreme Court Committee on Certification of Court Interpreters. "We also hope to provide interpreters with incentives to do longer proceedings."

"The new fee schedule results in a significant increase in compensation for interpreters who work longer than two hours per day. Interpreters who work up to two hours still earn a base of \$50 or \$75, depending on whether the interpreter is certified. This base will apply even if the interpreter works 30 minutes or less," said McKenna.

The Judiciary adopted different rates for certified and non-certified interpreters, according to McKenna, "...to encourage non-certified interpreters to gain the necessary skills to become certified and reward the efforts of those who improve their skills and achieve certification. Before the January 1, 2004 effective date, we plan to come up with a list of certifications we will recognize in addition to federal certification. We are also exploring possible methods of conducting our own certification testing, although due to the linguistic diversity of Hawai'i, this may become cost prohibitive."

The new fee schedule no longer distinguishes between interpreting in trial, as opposed to non-trial proceedings, and provides for:

- A two-hour minimum base under which certified interpreters earn \$75 and non-certified interpreters, \$50.
- \$37.50 for certified and \$25 for non-certified interpreters for each additional hour or part thereof beyond the two-hour minimum, up to eight hours.
- \$56.25 for certified and \$37.50 for non-certified interpreters for each additional hour beyond eight hours.

A complete listing of the revised court interpreter fee schedule is available on the Judiciary website at www.courts.state.hi.us.

View the [revised fee schedule](#) (requires Adobe Acrobat)

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